



Connecticut State Dental Association

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Legislative Testimony Appropriations Committee Governor's Budget Mitigation Plan Thursday, March 11, 2010 Bruce Tandy, D.M.D

Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, and members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Bruce Tandy and I am the president of the Connecticut State Dental Association which represents over 2400 dentists and dental team members. I also serve on the planning committee for the CT Mission of Mercy (CTMOM) and the national foundation for MOM. I have been practicing for 30 years in Vernon and Coventry. Thank you for the opportunity to present this written testimony to you in opposition to the cuts in adult Medicaid dollars for non emergency dental treatment that are outlined in the Governor's recent budget mitigation plan.

At the moment and over the next two days, 2000 patients are lining up to be treated at the 3rd Annual CT Mission of Mercy project in Middletown. Over 1500 volunteers from the dental profession and the community will donate their time and efforts to treat the underserved of the state of Connecticut in a caring, no questions asked environment. With the increase to over 1000 dentists treating the state's Husky patients, we have seen a steady decrease in the number of children seen at this event due to the care they are receiving in offices around the state. We have also seen an increase in the treatment of their parents at a reimbursement rate which is only 25% of the usual fees seen in the typical dental office. Yet many of the adults with limited funds and safety net coverage will look to MOM this year as their dental home.

You have heard this before and I would like to make the point again. Charity is not a healthcare system. Failing to maintain the limited funds in the system will push more of these patients into the emergency rooms of the state where the costs are significantly higher and provide only palliative treatment. They will lose valuable work days, lose self esteem, and miss employment opportunities that would provide for their families and drive the economy of the state due to infections, pain, and cosmetic challenges.

With the increasing unemployment numbers, there will be more individuals seeking state help through the Medicaid program than ever before. There are presently estimates of 300,000 that are presently covered by this program with more joining these ranks every

day. To cut these dollars now when the need is greatest is not what I believe government is about. The dentists have stepped up to the plate to improve the oral health of this population through a huge increase in Medicaid participation, the MOM project, developing public education programs with CPTV, and joining in the Home by One pilot project. Oral health has been shown to not only effect the mouth, but the overall health of the individual. The cost in the future to repair the oral and physical health of the citizens of Connecticut by failing to prevent and treat health problems now, will ultimately be a financial quagmire, especially as the debate on universal health care rages on. Government needs to do its part and not put off the higher costs to another day.

I would like to thank the Committee for your consideration of this testimony. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'B. Tandy', with a stylized, cursive flourish at the end.

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